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The Bedouin of al-Qasr idealize the life of the pastoralist. It is a dominant theme in their culture. Gardening and arboriculture are perceived by the Bedouins as involving long hours of work, anxiety over waiting for profits, and complex market operations. They understand the logic and operation of the sheep market. Sheep are a store of value, a source of security, and a medium of exchange. In a good year of rain, a man can reap a good crop of barley, and buy more sheep against the inevitable bad year to come. While most Bedouins are, in one way or another, involved with the modern cash economy which ties al-Qasr to Marsa Matruh, the Bedouins who go into the production of cash crops on a large scale are those who can afford the risk of failure and who can survive the meager profits of the initial stage. These are the men who can adjust their world view from that of the pastoralist to that of the entrepreneur. There are only a few of these men in al-Qasr but they dominate the economy. Through them, most of the Bedouins of al-Qasr are linked to the national economy.

Land and Economy

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The period between 1960 and 1964 was one of significant economic change in al-Qasr. Dependence upon farming increased while pastoralist activities became less important. In the past, none of the Bedouins now living in al-Qasr were "nomads;" even my oldest informants had moved only once or twice to

*613 with Bait Bu Taram of 'Ailit Lazumi. These marriages and
159 their resultant alliances enhance the political power and
581 social status of Hajj 'Ali within and without al-Qasr.
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Although he has no education himself, and neither reads
159 nor writes, Hajj 'Ali has sent his son to the University of
156 Alexandria. Hajj 'Ali's son is the only boy from al-Qasr
873 ever to attend the university. Hajj 'Ali desired that his
[212] son study law at the university or enter the military academy
"and become an officer." But his son objected to this, saying:
"Either way I will be employed by the government and will not
be permitted to travel and see other countries." Hajj 'Ali did
not argue with this: he said that his son should study what
he wished. The son is now studying in the Faculty of Commerce
156 at Alexandria. Hajj 'Ali is also sending his daughters to
159 the primary school in al-Qasr. Not all of the Bedouins believe
872 that girls should receive an education.
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156 Hajj 'Ali places among the "status group" in terms
159 of wealth. Although he has now committed himself to olive-
554 farming as a way of life, he remains one of the biggest sheep
•472 owners in al-Qasr. Therefore, he is identified with both tra-
ditional and modern symbols of status. Hajj 'Ali differs in
156 one important way from other members of the "status group"
159 in that he owns three small general stores, two in al-Qasr
554 and one far to the west in Sallum. This fact has several
443 significant implications. Shops in al-Qasr (there are five
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156 of them) cater largely to the needs of the lineage in whose
159 territory they are located. They are operated mostly on a
554 credit basis. Lineage members, as debtors, feel gratitude
443 but also, and more importantly, loyalty toward their kinsman
423 and creditor. Hajj 'Ali is the only member of al-Qasr who
472 owns two shops, and the only Bedouin in the whole Western Desert
* [613] who owns three shops. His brother owns a shop in Matruh.
[452] Furthermore, the shop in Sallum is in a strategic position on
156 the Libyan border which, coincidentally or not, is a point
159 for importing, and also smuggling, foreign goods into Egypt.
554 The possession and utilization of foreign products is definitely
443 a status symbol all over Egypt. Hence, the person in this
439 area who can control, however slightly, the distribution of
472 such goods has a lever with which to exact prestige and
favors from the "status group" in al-Qasr who now welcome
these symbols (tobacco, pistols, rifles, radios) and the
bureaucrats of Marsa Matruh who crave them (food goods,
clothing materials, car parts).

156 Besides all this, Hajj 'Ali is involved in a small
159 stone-cutting operation which supplies stones for house
554 building, he cooperates with his three brothers in a well-
[316] cleaning concern, and contracts government heavy equipment
[312] to build earth dams. The material evidence of his status
[421] is that he is the only man in al-Qasr with two compound-type
[342] houses (one he built thirteen years ago), and the only man
[595] with four wives.

156 with four wives. It is not hard to understand why the people
159 of al-Qasr consider Hajj 'Ali a rajal khair par excellence.
554 For instance, when I asked one man it he could give me some
627 examples of court cases, he replied: "The one who is not an
124 'aqila pays no attention to anything save getting food for his children. The rajal khair has money and men (a reference to the "old days" when a person needed cohorts for battle), and so he always pays instead of us. He lends us money and helps us in doing anything, like Hajj 'Ali does." In another
124 interview, one man showed great respect for Hajj 'Ali's tradi-
156 tional status and modern ability to deal with the outside
159 world by giving him the honorific title of "shaikh," and
554 showing that the Bedouins of al-Qasr put their trust in him:
439 "When the olive merchants come from Alexandria, they go to
•472 Shaikh 'Ali, someone who knows about olives. They ask him
245 what kind of olives al-Qasr has. He shows the merchants, and they say: 'I will give you so much for them.' They make an agreement, and Hajj 'Ali collects the olives and gets the price for them."

156 In terms of local politics, I would guess, but do
159 not have data to prove, that Hajj 'Ali was the third party
554 most frequently referred to in seeking a termination of
[627] conflict. He was commonly asked to participate in these
[114] matters not only by the disputants themselves but also by the 'aqila or other third party presiding. He was sometimes